

**Deerfield, IL** - U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) hosted incumbent and mayor-elects from communities throughout the Tenth Congressional District today for his annual mayor's summit. Congressman Kirk heard directly from district mayors while providing a Washington update on key Northern Illinois issues -- highlighting new opportunities for the federal government to support local transportation and law enforcement programs.

"Our mayor's summit provides an open forum to discuss local issues and update district leaders on federal activities that affect their communities," said Congressman Kirk. "We have new opportunities for local communities to receive homeland defense and other law enforcement funds to support area police departments. Our mayors are key decision makers and should play a key role in implementing federal programs intended to help out their communities."

Kirk opened the meeting with a congressional update on national issues including: his legislation expanding stem cell research, congressional energy legislation and local projects scheduled for funding in the pending federal transportation legislation.

## **Reducing Traffic Gridlock**

Kirk highlighted several benefits the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEA-LU) will bring to northern Illinois as well as other transportation projects benefiting the Tenth District.

"The federal government is doing its part to reduce traffic gridlock with the new Lake County Traffic Management Center scheduled to open this July," said Kirk who helped secure funding for the project. "The center will be the heart of a hi-tech system using fiber-optic cables and cameras to control major stop lights in Lake County. It will adjust stop lights for weather, time-of-day, seasons and accidents. This is good news for many of us stuck at a traffic light without a car in sight from any direction."

Metra's North-Central line is one of two commuter rail projects that will also reduce gridlock. Double tracking of the North-Central line is scheduled for completion in December thanks to \$52 million in federal funding. The line will dramatically expand service from four to 16 trains a day, providing more flexibility to and from the city for northwest suburban commuters.

TEA-LU authorizes funding for Metra's new STAR Line that will serve communities in Arlington Heights, Rolling Meadows, Mount Prospect and Hoffman Estates. The STAR Line will become the first commuter rail line in northeastern Illinois designed to address suburb-to-suburb commutes. It will help relieve traffic congestion in the northwest suburbs and help us meet our obligations under the Clean Air Act by reducing air pollution. TEA-LU also funds an Intelligent Transportation System for the Lake-Cook corridor alerting drivers to traffic delays, over \$1 million for the Route 176/Route 41 Interstate Improvement project and over \$9 million for reconstruction of the Route 60 bridge over I-294.

## **Protecting the Environment**

Kirk also focused on several environmental priorities including: flood protection programs, reduced beach closings, mosquito abatement programs and the cleanup of Waukegan Harbor.

The Des Plaines River runs through many towns and villages of the Tenth District and the flood of 2004 is still fresh in people's memories. Kirk secured over \$1.3 million this year for flood programs along the Des Plaines River that will alleviate flooding for many towns bordering the river.

Federal legislation is also pending to ban partially-treated human sewage from being dumped into our waterways. The Save Our Waters From Sewage Act will stop the EPA from turning the clock back on 30 years of water protection under the Clean Water Act. The legislation highlights investment and upgrade needs for our nation's waste water infrastructure. Although the city of Chicago bans the dumping of partially-treated sewage, the city of Milwaukee does not. During the heavy rains of spring 2004, Milwaukee dumped over four billion gallons of sewage into Lake Michigan. That summer, Chicago experienced a record number of beach closings even though no direct link between the sewage dumping and beach closings was found.

"I suspect the beach closings are being caused by dumping raw sewage into the Great Lakes," said Kirk who is an original co-sponsor of the Save Our Waters From Sewage Act. "As summer approaches, we should not have to worry about our children swimming in Lake Michigan. We must act as good environmental stewards to our most precious freshwater resource. This legislation will enforce this responsibility and, I believe, reduce the number of beach closings."

Kirk also highlighted progress in the cleanup of Waukegan Harbor where \$1.4 million was awarded to the city of Waukegan to replace and lower a critical water line that runs through Waukegan Harbor. Replacement of the water line will expand Waukegan's water capacity, providing the city with the opportunity to expand businesses and create jobs along the harbor and throughout the city. But more importantly, it is a critical first step to unlocking Waukegan's economic potential.

### **Drug-free schools and communities**

The congressman discussed ways the federal government can work with towns and villages to combat gangs and to keep our schools drug free. Kirk shared statistics showing a decrease in club drug use among suburban teens, but an increase in heroin- related emergency room visits and deaths in Chicago's suburbs over the past three years. A cocaine raid in Waukegan last week followed by a million dollar marijuana bust shows we face more work to combat the flow of illegal drugs into our suburbs.

"The good news is the Anti-Club Drug strategy we entered into with the Netherlands and Belgium is working," said Kirk. "The bad news is heroin use is rising and cocaine and marijuana remain a problem in our suburbs. The arrests in Waukegan and Mount Prospect clearly show this is no longer a Chicago problem, but an area-wide concern that needs to be addressed."

Congressman Kirk is working with several Waukegan and North Chicago churches to secure federal funding for anti-gang initiatives the President spoke of in this year's State of the Union address. Drugs and gangs usually go hand-in-hand and providing funding for these programs is vital to keeping kids off the streets, off drugs and in the classroom.

Contact: Matt Towson  
847-940-0202  
cell: 773-454-5396